

SELECT COMMITTEE ON COMMUNICATIONS AND DIGITAL**The future of journalism****CALL FOR EVIDENCE**

The House of Lords Communications and Digital Committee, under the chairmanship of Lord Gilbert of Panteg, is to hold an inquiry into the future of journalism. The committee invites written contributions by **Tuesday 21 April 2020 (revised)**.

The committee expects to hear from invited contributors in public sessions from March to June 2020 inclusive and to publish a report in the summer. The Government has undertaken to respond in writing to select committee reports.

Background

Journalism has long been essential to the UK's democracy and culture. However, the ways in which it is produced and consumed are changing significantly. Digital technologies have called into question what journalism is, in a society in which journalistic content takes an ever-wider range of forms and in which it is easier than ever for citizens to act as journalists. While over 70,000 people are employed as journalists in the UK, many others engage in journalistic activities—including in related professions.¹ Social media give individuals greater freedom to publish news and analysis themselves and make it easier for politicians to speak directly to voters. However, this freedom can come at the expense of the external accountability and fact-checking which mediation through journalism can provide, and citizen journalists may not have received the same professional and legal training.

Established news brands face considerable competition from alternative sources of news and analysis online. The average national newspaper circulation has more than halved since 2010 and, as news is increasingly broken online, newspapers can rely more comment and analysis. Publishers are seeking new ways to engage readers: including through journalists' use of social media and the creation of innovative digital content.² Broadcast journalism faces similar challenges as audiences decline: only half of 16–24 year-olds watch TV news compared with 94 per cent of over-65s.³ Journalists must learn new skills and present their work in new ways as more people get their news in a digital form.

In a survey by the National Council for the Training of Journalists, 70 per cent of journalists reported that the intensity of their work had increased.⁴ Eighty-five per cent of journalists reported a need for an increased range of skills in the profession while around two-thirds

¹ National Council for the Training of Journalists, *Journalists at Work: Their views on training, recruitment and conditions* (October 2018), p 14:

<https://www.nctj.com/downloadlibrary/jaW%20Report%202018.pdf> [accessed 3 February 2020]

² Ofcom, *News Consumption in the UK: 2019* (July 2019), p 34:

https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0027/157914/uk-news-consumption-2019-report.pdf [accessed 3 February 2020]

³ *Ibid.*, p 60

⁴ National Council for the Training of Journalists, *Journalists at Work: Their views on training, recruitment and conditions* (October 2018), p 68:

<https://www.nctj.com/downloadlibrary/jaW%20Report%202018.pdf> [accessed 3 February 2020]

felt that they personally needed more training. The areas in which training was most desired were the use of analytics, video editing, photoshop, updated media law and data journalism.⁵ Some consumers may also need help to adapt to the changing news media. In response to a recommendation by Dame Frances Cairncross, the Government has undertaken to publish a media literacy strategy by the summer.⁶

Journalists must hold the trust of the audiences they serve in the face of scrutiny and competition on social media and other platforms as well as increased polarisation. Trust in the news fell by 11 percentage points between 2015 and 2019.⁷ A YouGov poll found that only 18 per cent of people trusted journalists to tell the truth.⁸

Journalism as a profession is not representative of the UK population it serves. Only 11 per cent of journalists are from working-class backgrounds and only six per cent are not white.⁹ White university graduates from middle-class backgrounds dominate national news desks, which are based in major cities. Sixty-five per cent of journalists are employed in London and the south east, compared with 29 per cent of employees across the whole economy.¹⁰ Aspiring journalists without independent means face particular financial barriers. The National Council for the Training of Journalists found that 87 per cent of journalists had done work experience before going into the profession, for an average of eight weeks. Only six per cent were paid, while 21 per cent received expenses and 74 per cent were unpaid.¹¹ The Sutton Trust estimates that it costs a young person at least £1,000 to do a month of unpaid work experience in London.¹² These barriers can persist throughout a journalist's career due to precarity of work, particularly among freelancers.

⁵ National Council for the Training of Journalists, *Journalists at Work* (October 2018), p 14: <https://www.nctj.com/downloadlibrary/JaV%20Report%202018.pdf> [accessed 3 February 2020]

⁶ HM Government, 'Government response to the Cairncross review: a sustainable future for journalism' (27 January 2020): <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-cairncross-review-a-sustainable-future-for-journalism/government-response-to-the-cairncross-review-a-sustainable-future-for-journalism#response-to-recommendations> [accessed 3 February 2020]

⁷ Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism, 'Digital News Report 2019': <http://www.digitalnewsreport.org/survey/2019/united-kingdom-2019/> [accessed 3 February 2020]

⁸ YouGov, 'Conspiracy and Democracy survey': [https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/5j57dtwlc0/YGC%20Conspiracy%20Theories%20\(GB\).pdf](https://d25d2506sfb94s.cloudfront.net/cumulus_uploads/document/5j57dtwlc0/YGC%20Conspiracy%20Theories%20(GB).pdf) [accessed 3 February 2020]

⁹ Social Mobility Commission, *State of the Nation 2016: Social Mobility in Great Britain* (November 2016), p. 127: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/569410/Social_Mobility_Commission_2016_REPORT_WEB_1_.pdf [accessed 3 February 2020];

National Council for the Training of Journalists, *Diversity in Journalism* (November 2017), p 7: <https://www.nctj.com/downloadlibrary/DIVERSITY%20JOURNALISM%204WEB.pdf> [accessed 3 February 2020]

¹⁰ National Council for the Training of Journalists, *Journalists at Work* (October 2018), p 6: <https://www.nctj.com/downloadlibrary/JaV%20Report%202018.pdf> [accessed 3 February 2020]

¹¹ National Council for the Training of Journalists, *Journalists at Work* (October 2018), p 41: <https://www.nctj.com/downloadlibrary/JaV%20Report%202018.pdf> [accessed 3 February 2020]

¹² The Sutton Trust, *Internships – Unpaid, unadvertised, unfair* (January 2018), p 1: <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/Internships-2018-briefing.pdf> [accessed 3 February 2020]

As Dame Frances Cairncross noted in her 2019 report, news organisations themselves face significant financial challenges.¹³ Dame Frances focussed on local and regional journalism, which has historically played a key role in local communities and in the training of journalists. However, these pressures have affected national and international providers too. As print circulations and print advertising revenue have declined, publications have had to seek alternative revenue streams. Some have focused on digital subscriptions, which increasingly include a range of content such as videos, podcasts, emails and events. Others rely more on the online advertising market, in which Dame Frances argued that online platforms have disproportionate power over publishers.¹⁴

Aim of the inquiry

The Communications and Digital Committee wishes to investigate how the production and consumption of journalism is changing, how journalists can be supported to adapt to those changes and how the profession can become more trusted by—and representative of—the general population.

Questions

The committee seeks responses to the following questions to form the written evidence for its report. Contributors need not address every question and experts are encouraged to focus on their specialism. Other issues may be discussed provided that their relevance is explained.

Submissions which have been previously published will not be accepted as evidence. However, published material may be referenced where relevant.

- How should journalism be defined and what is its value to society? What is the difference between ‘citizen journalism’ and other forms of journalism?
- How have digital technologies changed the consumption of journalism?
- How can public policy improve media literacy, particularly among those who have a low level of digital literacy?
- How have digital technologies changed the production of journalism? Do journalists have access to the training necessary to adapt to the digital world?
- What qualifications do professional journalists need? How could public policy better support non-degree routes into journalism?
- What are the main challenges for freelance journalists? How could public policy better support them?
- Why is the journalism profession not more representative of the population? How could this be addressed?

¹³ Dame Frances Cairncross, *The Cairncross Review: a sustainable future for journalism* (12 February 2018): https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/779882/021919_DCMS_Cairncross_Review_.pdf [accessed 3 February 2020]

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p 57

- Why has trust in journalism declined? How could it be improved? How can journalists better understand and convey the concerns and priorities of people who do not live in London or other metropolitan hubs?
- How can innovation and collaboration help news providers of all types to maintain sustainable business models and adapt what they produce to audience demand? What lessons can be learnt from successful innovations, including in other countries?
- Are there any other ways in which public policy could better support journalists and news organisations, now and in the future? Are there examples from other countries from which the Government could learn?

The committee encourages interested parties to follow the progress of the inquiry on Twitter @LordsCommsCom and at: <http://www.parliament.uk/future-of-journalism-inquiry>

ANNEX: GUIDANCE FOR SUBMISSIONS

Submissions should be made through the online form at: <https://committees.parliament.uk/call-for-evidence/11/the-future-of-journalism/>

The committee encourages people from all backgrounds to contribute and believes that it is particularly important to hear from groups which are often under-represented. The committee's work is most effective when it is informed by as diverse a range of perspectives and experiences as possible.

Please bring this document to the attention of groups and individuals who may not have received a copy direct, including those who have not previously engaged with Parliament.

The deadline for making a written submission is 23.59 on Tuesday 21 April 2020.

Concise submissions are preferred. A submission longer than six pages should include a one-page summary. Paragraphs should be numbered. All submissions made through the written submission form will be acknowledged automatically by email.

Submissions which are accepted by the committee as written evidence may be published online at any stage. When it is published as written evidence a submission becomes subject to parliamentary copyright and is protected by parliamentary privilege. Submissions which have been previously published will not be accepted as evidence.

Once your submission has been accepted as evidence you will be notified by a further email, and at this point you may publicise or publish it yourself. In doing so you must indicate that it was prepared for the committee, and you should be aware that your publication or re-publication of your evidence may not be protected by parliamentary privilege.

Personal contact details will be removed from evidence before publication, but will be retained by the Committee Office and may be used for specific purposes relating to the committee's work—for instance to seek additional information.

The committee may invite individuals and groups who have submitted written evidence, as well as others, to answer questions in a public session. These oral evidence sessions are usually held in Westminster and broadcast online; transcripts are also taken and published online.

Substantive communications to the committee about the inquiry should be addressed to the clerk of the committee, whether or not they are intended to constitute a formal written submission.